

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION

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APPLY

July 28, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. KISSINGER 25X1
FROM: JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE *jan 67*
SUBJECT: Enemy Assessment of Offensive and Future Plans

The document, issued in mid-July, notes that VietCong objectives have not been achieved in the general offensive and blames the lack of decisive victories on a poor performance by local forces. The paper indicates a new offensive will be conducted in August and September to tie down ARVN units and destroy pacification, particularly in MR 4. The enemy's local forces are repeatedly urged to attack the GVN much harder. The principal objectives of the attack will be to force President Nixon to accept the enemy's 7 point negotiating position and then to lose the Presidential election ("If he remains President, the VC will meet with great difficulty despite a ceasefire"). The study reportedly states that the enemy may make some negotiating concessions but will not present a new proposal, as such. Even after a ceasefire, however, the enemy will continue its attacks to seize control of provincial and local governments ("not in the name of the NLF but against the regime of Nguyen Van Thieu" -- a possible sign that the enemy may back away from its demand that we remove Thieu as the price of a ceasefire). As a final point, the study asserts that if a political settlement is not reached before November, the enemy will revert to protracted warfare.

Comment: The document, if accurate, represents a major evaluation of the current situation and provides useful insight into the enemy's future plans. It confirms that the VC will make a maximum military

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effort in August and September to influence the Presidential elections and force acceptance of the major elements of its negotiating position. In this offensive the enemy will again employ its April/May strategy of tying down large concentrations of ARVN forces in remote battlefields while attempting to exploit the resulting vacuum in lowland and Delta pacification areas to expand population control. The offensive's principal objectives are the electoral defeat of President Nixon and a settlement of the war by November, both of which the enemy believes feasible.

Based on the document's assertions, we can expect no change in the enemy's basic negotiating position (i. e. no ceasefire prior to agreement, at least in principle, to a three part coalition government) but there may be some give on its demand for President Thieu's resignation. Its statement that post ceasefire military actions will continue against the Thieu regime despite "combined control commissions" openly presages a concession in this area and may be intended to prepare the cadre for such an eventuality. Based on personal recollection the report, however, cannot be viewed as authoritative but we tentatively conclude that it provides a reliable preview of a last minute, maximum effort to end the war by November.

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